

Rajab-`Alí Qahír (whose sister had married the Báb while he was in Isfahan), his brother Mullá `Alí Muhammad Siráj, and Mírzá Hádí Dawlatábádí.

To these figures was added Mírzá Nasru'lláh Maliku'l-Mutakallimín, an important figure in the Constitutional movement. As a consequence, a number of the Bábís in the area also remained Azalís, especially in the villages of Sidih, Tár, Tarq, and Dawlatábád.

This area saw numerous episodes of persecution instigated by the leading `ulamá: Hájí Mullá Muhammad Báqir Isfahání

(q.v.; named by Bahá'u'lláh "the Wolf"), his son Mullá

Muhammad Taqí (q.v., Áqá Najafí), and Mír

Muhammad Husayn Imám-Jum`ih (q.v.; named by Bahá'u'lláh

Raqshá, she-serpent); and by the governor Zillu's-Sultán

(q.v.), who ruled the province from 1874 to 1907. During the time of

Bahá'u'lláh,

there were seven major outbursts of persecution in the Isfahan area, including

the execution of several prominent Bahá'ís, including Sayyid

Muhammad Hasan and Sayyid Muhammad Husayn, the King and Beloved of Martyrs

(see "Nahrí family") in 1879 and Mírzá Ashraf

in 1888. In the villages around Isfahan there were also numerous episodes

of persecution and some martyrdoms: in Najafábád in 1864,

1889, 1899, and 1910; in Sidih in 1890; and in Zavárih in 1926.

As a consequence of the persecutions, many of the Bahá'ís

of Isfahan migrated to other areas. Some, like the merchant Hájí

Muhammad Ridá, went to Sabzivár and then on to Ashkhabad

(see "Turkmenistan"), while others moved to the Haifa-Akka area.

Despite the persecutions, the number of Bahá'ís in the

area grew both in Isfahan itself and in villages such as Sidih where three

well-known poets, Mírzá Na`ím, Nayyir, and Siná,

became Bahá'ís in about 1297/1879-80. In towns such as Ardistán

where there had been conversions in the Bábí period, there

was continued growth with the number of Bahá'ís reaching

some 300 by the time of `Abdu'l-Bahá. There was also some geographical

diffusion in that the religion was introduced to some new villages. Near

Ardistán, a large number from the village of Bábu'r-Ruhá

became Bahá'ís after the conversion of the landowner there,

Mírzá Fath-`Alí (Fath-i-A`zam). The Bahá'í

Faith also spread among the nomadic tribes in this area. In particular,

among the Búyir Ahmad section of the Kúh-Galú tribes

there were several hundred conversions during the time of `Abdu'l-Bahá.

There were also converts in Burújin in Bakhtiyári

country.

Surprisingly, in view of the intense persecutions of the Faith in this

region, a number of prominent citizens managed to remain Bahá'ís.

For example, Mírzá Asadu'lláh Khán was

the finance minister of the province from about 1878 to 1908.

The Bahá'í community of the small town of Najafábád has been a particularly large and important one. A Bahá'í school was established at Najafábád, and when this was closed down by the government in 1934, Mr. Abu'l-Qásim Faizi (q.v.) went to the town to act as tutor to the four hundred Bahá'í children affected by the closure.

In 1933 Keith Ransom-Kehler (q.v.) died in Isfahan while on a tour of Iran. She was buried next to the graves of the King and Beloved of Martyrs. Shoghi Effendi referred on several occasions to these three graves and they became a site frequently visited by Bahá'ís.

Holy places

Holy places associated with the stay of the Báb in this city include the house of the Imám-Jum`ih; the palace of Manúchihr Khán at Chihil Sutún; the house of Mírzá Asadu'lláh Vazír where the remains of the Báb were kept for a short time; and the house and tombs of the King of Martyrs and Beloved of Martyrs, together with the adjacent tomb of Ransom-Kehler.

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